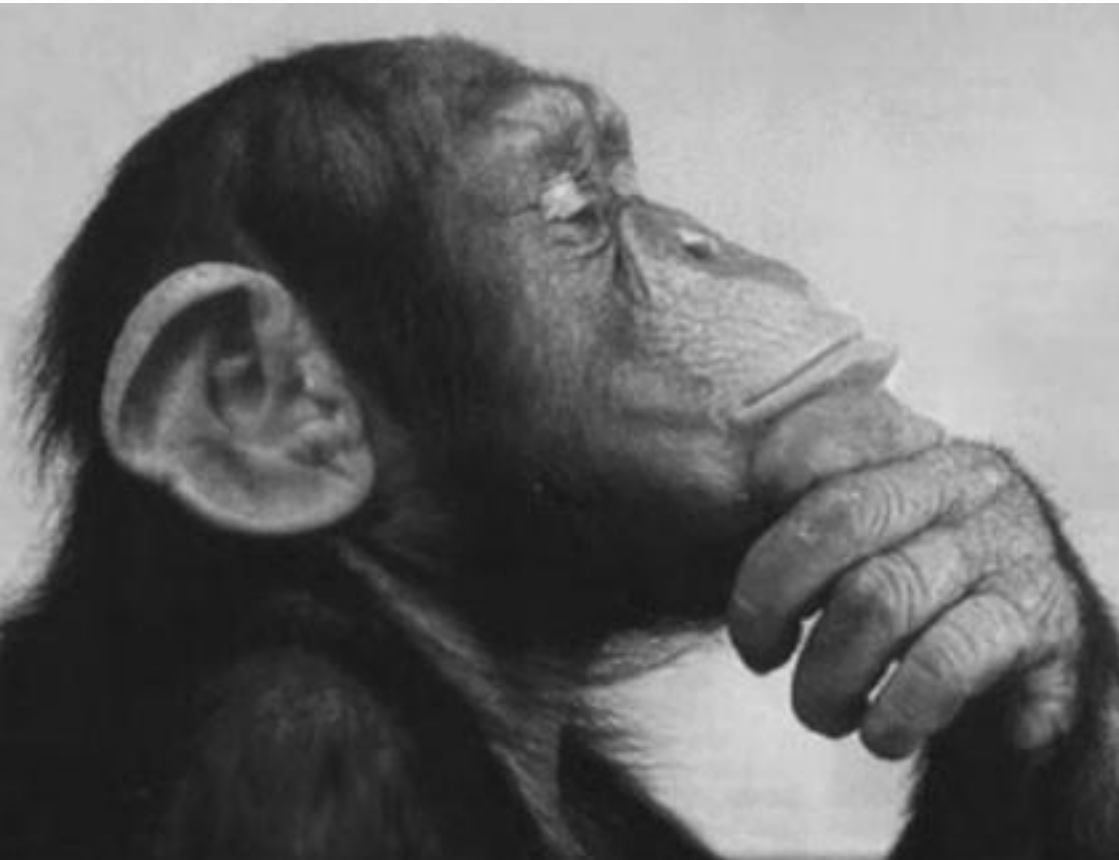


**“The mind is everything.
What you think, you become”**



On Philosophy
NextGen Housing Research: Chapter **01**

introduction

Psychology is the makeup of how we act, think and live as humans. Your cultural history, religious background and education all play a role in making up the complex nature of the human psyche. The human psyche is a complex that determines, what we as individuals and a society believe to be true. For the purpose of this chapter, investigations have been made into what elements of the psyche play a role in our philosophy of living. Western psychology has engrained in itself a particular set of rules for living, so to has the east. Both resulting in completely different and opposing philosophies on the way we should live.

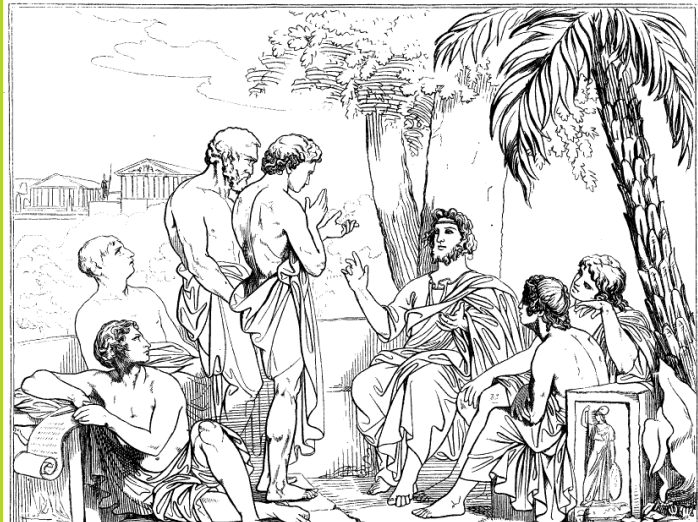
This chapter attempts to explore, but by no means tries to answer the following questions:

“ Who has the right answer as to how we should live? ”

“ Have the eastern cultures got it right? Or have the west?

“ Should we be searching for a middle ground, or is there a better way of living than either east or west? ”

“ How can these two cultures learn and influence each other to create a uniform philosophy of living? Would this be a desirable approach?”



Since the time of the 1950s and 60s following World War II and through the help of the removal of rent controls, the Australian psychological attitude towards lifestyle has been primarily materialistic. On the whole, success in Australia is measured in terms of material possessions that one owns. Whether you like it or not, we are all judged based on the assets we own. All the way from what brand of shoes you wear, the type of television you own, the car, or more importantly, cars that you drive, through to the size of the house that you live in. No matter how big of a debt you've gotten yourself into, to get all of that, all that matters is that yours is the biggest.

“ The evolution of the home ”

01

Caves & Natural Landforms
-Purely for shelter



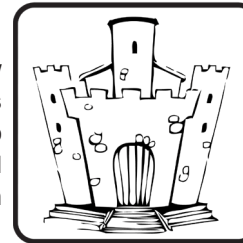
02

Thatched Hut
resourced from
available materials
-Shelter/Warmth



03

Ancient times saw
larger dwellings
- Buildings used to
represent status and
wealth



04

Small houses for
families
- modest dwellings,
big enough to suit
ones needs



05

McMansions Australia's
obsession with size has
hit critical capacity
- These are symbols of
Status/Success/Debt



06

Apartment buildings
- Western cultures,
particularly Australia
have been slow to
adopt this typology
of building for living,



07



What comes next?

“ Great Australian Dream ”

The Great Australian Dream is a belief that in Australia, home ownership can lead to a better life and is an expression of success and security. The dream typically consists of a house on quarter acre suburban block surrounded by a garden, with a hills hoist and barbecue out the back.

The psychological connotations of owning the dream is interesting in that society's quest for the dream represent a deadening conformism and narrow mindedness. Particularly in the advent where streetscapes became far too identical and people rarely expressed themselves and who they are through their house.

Somewhere along the way, the shift has gone from one of satisfaction of owning the great Australian dream, to the obsession of making sure your 'dream' is bigger than your neighbours 'dream'.



“ Keeping up with the Jones’ ”

The pursuit of Australia's dream was always going to have a huge psychological impact on Australians. As if trying to save money to buy a house wasn't hard enough, there was always the expectation that you need to 'keep up with the Jones'.

According to Roger Mason, “the demand for status goods, fueled by conspicuous consumption, has diverted many resources away from investment in the manufacture of more material goods and services in order to satisfy consumer preoccupations with their relative social standing and prestige.”

This quickly turned the dream into a nightmare, because not only did society expect you to keep up with the Jones', it expected you to have more than the Jones'.

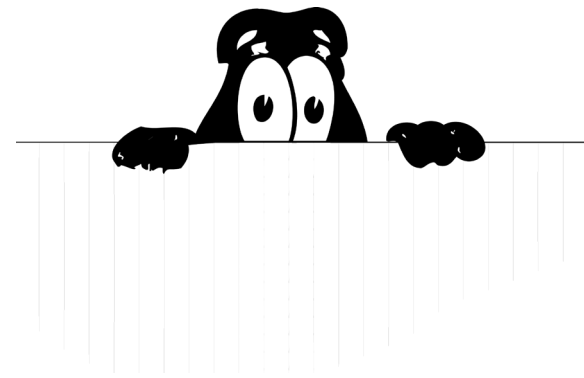


“WELL, WELL! IT'S THE JONESES AND THIER NEIGHBOURS, WHO I SEE ARE STILL MANAGING TO KEEP UP WITH THEM



“ Mine is Bigger than yours”

Social status in Australia plays a huge role in the psyche of the individual. To be seen to have ‘made it’ in Australia society expects that you have a big house with lots of possessions. But it doesn’t stop at that. Because Australians are competitive by nature, a big house is not big enough, it has to be the biggest. It is this psychological mindset that has been the catalyst for fugly McMansions that we see in abundance.



“ My Massive Fence”

The push to have the biggest, the best and the most has caused a state of almost paranoia, and at the same time, a switch to modesty and secrecy. On one hand, we want to show off our material possessions to everyone to stake our claim of success, but on the other hand, there is a shift towards a quiet confidence about what we have. Of course, putting up an ‘armour’ of fencing hides ones possessions, but it is more than just a physical barrier between neighbours, it is a mindset of separation that subconsciously sinks in rendering society unable and unwilling to create a sense of community within their neighbourhoods, unlike that of many eastern cultures who embrace the community spirit.



Eastern Philosophy refers to the various teachings, themes, traditions and religions that span over East Asia, South East Asia & South Asia. The principles of Eastern philosophy originated in 600BC in the countries of India, Persia, China, Korea , Japan and to an extent the Middle East (which also overlaps with Western Philosophy). As Eastern Philosophy has developed for thousands of years and spans over many different countries, each with histories that have effected cultural understanding and beliefs of society; the overall study of Eastern philosophy can be seen as both contradicting and complementing. The following quotes pose a questions and quotes from various Eastern Philosophers.

“Hinduism”

Hinduism is the world's oldest religion originating in circa 10000 BC. Hinduism is based upon religious, philosophical and cultural ideas which originated in India. Subhamoy Das suggests in 'Hinduism for Beginners' that the main beliefs of Hinduism are 'reincarnation, one absolute being of multiple manifestations, the law of cause and effect, following the path of righteousness, and the desire for liberation from the cycle of births and death'¹. Hinduism is considered a Dhrama (a way of life) and it is associated with traditions, beliefs, rituals and practices such as Yoga, Ayurveda, Vastu, Jyotish, Yajna, Puja, Tantra, Vedanta, Karma, etc.

Hinduism today is the third largest religion in the world, practiced by over one billion people. Many practices of Hinduism have been integrated into western culture and society as they contain many spiritual & health benefits such as Yoga, Ayurveda (Natural Medicine) and meditation.



¹ Abraham, Juliana, 2008, NOVA, 'Mastering the Art', p 36.

“The individual ‘I’ exists for as long as there is desire for pleasure.” Maharamayana

“Hinduism has made marvelous discoveries in things of religion, of the spirit, of the soul. We have no eye for these great and fine discoveries. We are dazzled by the material progress that Western science has made. Ancient India has survived because Hinduism was not developed along material but spiritual lines” Mahatma Gandhi (1869 - 1948) was an advocate and pioneer of nonviolence

“ Confucianism”

Confucianism was developed by the Chinese philosopher Confucius who lived in the 6th Century BCE in China. Countries influenced by Confucianism include China, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Singapore and Japan.

‘In Confucianism, human beings are teachable, improvable and perfectible through personal and communal endeavour especially including self-cultivation and self-creation. A main idea of Confucianism is the cultivation of virtue and the development of moral perfection’¹

¹Wikipedia, ‘Confucianism’ , <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism> last updated 4th March 2010



“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life” Confucius

“Ability will never catch up with the demand for it.” Confucius

“Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.” Confucius

“A superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions.” Confucius

“ Taoism ”

Taoism is based on the idea that behind all material things and all the change in the world lies one fundamental, universal principle: the Way or Tao. This principle gives rise to all existence and governs everything, all change and all life. Behind the bewildering multiplicity and contradictions of the world lies a single unity, the Tao. The purpose of human life, then, is to live life according to the Tao

“Everything has its own place and function. That applies to people, although many don't seem to realize it, stuck as they are in the wrong job, the wrong marriage, or the wrong house. When you know and respect your Inner Nature, you know where you belong. You also know where you don't belong.”

Benjamin Hoff

“Manifest plainness, embrace simplicity, reduce selfishness, have few desires.” - Lao-tzu

Taoism

“ Buddhism ”

Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama and origins about 2500 years old. Many people consider Buddhism beyond a religion and more a philosophy or 'way of life'. Buddhism differs from religion as it not a fixed package of beliefs which is to be accepted in entirety, rather a teaching which each person learns tests and uses in their own way. Brian White writes on BuhhdaNet that 'Buddhism explains a purpose to life, it explains apparent injustice and inequality around the world, and it provides a code of practice or way of life that leads to true happiness' . ¹

Buddhism is increasing in popularity in western cultures as it provides the answers to the many problems in materialistic societies and also provides a deep understanding of human psychology and natural therapies. Such therapies are becoming popular in western society such as mediation. Buddhism depends more on understanding than faith and is such tolerant and accepting of other beliefs and religions.



¹1993, White, Brian, 'A Five Minutie Introduction' BuddhaNet (<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>) viewed 14/03/2010

There is no fire like greed,
No crime like hatred,
No sorrow like separation,
No sickness like hunger of heart,
And **no joy like the joy of freedom.**

Health, contentment and trust
Are your greatest possessions,
And **freedom your greatest joy.**

Look within. Be still.
Free from fear and attachment,
**Know the sweet joy of living in
the way** ; Words of the Buddha

**“Three things cannot be long hidden:
the sun, the moon, and the truth”** Buddha

**“The mind is everything. What you think,
you become”** Buddha

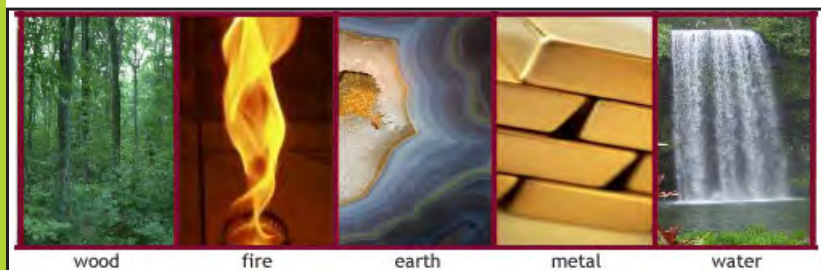
**“The difference between a dog fight and war
or between two groups of people is only in
its organisation”** Buddha

**“ What is the TRUE meaning
of LIFE ”**

“ Feung Shui ”

The philosophy of Feung Shui originated in China 3000 years ago. Feung Shui is a development of the Taoist philosophy and reflects their understanding of nature, revealing how to balance the energies (chi) of any given space to assure the health and good fortune for people inhabiting it. The theories of the Ying & Yang and the five elements (earth, fire, wood, water, metal) are incorporated into Feung Shui.

In traditional Feung Shui there are three schools of thought; Saun Yuan (three periods), Saun He (three combinations) and Hsuan K'ung (Mysterious Subtleities)¹. Abraham writes how all three schools of thought have the common understanding that 'the one truism in life is that change is constant'. Traditional Feung Shui practices by these three schools are based upon thousands of years of theory and research supporting them. Traditional Feung Shui practices include use of the Ba-Gua, compass, chinese horoscope and examination of the surrounding environment and landforms



¹Abraham, Juliana, 2008, NOVA, 'Mastering the Art', p 36.

Feung Shui has also been adapted to suit the needs Western society. When the principles of Feung Shui are applied to a cluttered room (which represents a cluttered mind), the room transforms into a clean uncluttered space with symbolisms around the room to release good 'chi' and capture bad 'chi'. In traditional Feung Shui a compass is used to determine the location of rooms and sites, as it is believed the positioning of a room will allow good 'chi' to flow into it easier. In Western Feung Shui, as it is viewed as both uneconomical and impractical to determine the location of a site and rooms with a compass (due to the way we live), it is believed that the entry front door is the mouth of the 'chi'. It is from the entry front door in which the good 'chi' enters the space, and hence blesses the user with prosperity, health and good fortune, making an emphasis of the Feung Shui and aesthetics of front entry doors. Western Feung Shui also called BTB Feung Shui incorporates the notion of symbolism, but does not use the traditional Chinese symbols, rather a westernised version of symbols which resonate with the user.

Although it may not be obviously evident, Feung Shui has influenced the planning of domestic housing and office spaces. The new trend of open space living and open plan office spaces is reflective of the understanding of Feung Shui in a space. The Ba-Gua chart defines a space into areas of lucky and unlucky star combinations. Open space arrangements allows for a flow of energy within a single space, which enable individualised areas within that space.

“ Chinese Gardens ”

Chinese gardens are classic examples of eastern mysticisms. The gardens are set up to encapsulate the spirit of the Chinese as a place for solitary and social contemplation. Their primary objective is to provide a place of spiritual utopia which enables one to connect with nature, but more importantly, provide a spiritual shelter for one to retreat to as an escape from their real social lives.

The 'escape' is a key concept that can, and should be drawn upon in western cultures as this will allow the same escapism within western society. The importance of this escape, in the context of this chapter is that western society is moving so fast, and there is so much pressure and expectation on people to succeed, that a place of escape would be a welcome experience.



As opposed to most gardens and open space in Australia, where plants are just plants, they have no meaning, within a Chinese garden, all of the plants and materials are chosen due to their specific spiritual meaning. For example, the flowering plum is used as it symbolises renewal and strength of will. The search for meaning within eastern cultures is something that should be welcomed into western society. As a mentality of hidden meaning within objects, whether it is plants or architecture all substances should have a spiritual meaning whereas in western cultures at the moment, all substances have a monetary value. This mindset can, and has caused consumerism in the west.



“ Co-housing project ”

Evidence of a change in the western living culture towards a more eastern one, can be seen in co-housing communities. Although their existence is not widespread throughout Australia, principles of co-housing are surely ones that can and should be brought into our everyday lives.

“Cohousing is a type of collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their own neighbourhoods.”

Residents of co housing communities are encouraged to interact with each other through many aspects of their everyday lives. This is done firstly by choice, but also, the design of these communities and the layout of the buildings encourages “both social contact and individual space”. Each person or family within these communities live in a conventional home with all of the facilities needed to survive independently. However, where they differ from standard models of community is through the provision of common facilities including open space, courtyards, playgrounds and a common house.

Further to this, the backbone of these communities is the participants openness and willingness to contribute to the community as a whole. Whether it be cooking an extra meal for a neighbour, or taking each other’s children to school, through to having a community car that all members can share, opposed to owning a car each.

The psychology behind living in these types of communities goes far beyond the conventional western living model. The communities mindset is approached in a collaborative manner, where everyone works in the interest of what is beneficial to the community. Whereas the common mindset in western culture is to be very narrow minded and to look after oneself before considering others.

Even down to the way people in these communities conduct business is community based, where many services are done free of charge with the expectation that something will get done in return to make up for it. Where the typical service is solicited through an agent or service provider in exchange directly for cash.



“ Shift in thinking ”

West's theoretical and the East's "empirical" approach to reality. The philosophy of the east is an intuitive empiricism, and its achievements are distinctively religious and artistic, providing in these realms more valid insights into reality than the theoretic west, The West's theory provided science, technology and democracy. These give it power"

-Joseph W. Cohen

Although it is not immediately obvious, there is a shift in thinking. Younger gen X'ers are sharing and renting houses, not only to save money, but they are chasing a lifestyle that is different to that of their parents who were chasing the Australian dream. Its not a lifestyle of owning a house and the trimmings that go with that, such as mowing the lawn and washing the cars on Saturday mornings. Instead they are trading that in for a small piece of real estate closer to the CBD, where the barbie out the back has been traded for the café serving double skinny lattes, the car, traded for a 'pushie' that is almost as expensive as their dads Holden. But most importantly, they are chasing a communal lifestyle where they know the names and faces of their neighbours.

“ The Dream will need to change ”

If the eastern model for living is one that the west should adopt, at least part thereof, it is the younger generations that are going to be the catalyst to do it. Not through any fault of their own, society is making it harder and harder for younger people to achieve the dream of home ownership due to sky rocketing house prices, interest rates rising, and a lack of good quality locations to buy in due to the fact that suburbs close to the CBD have been populated already.

Throughout the course of the near future, it may be the case that younger generations of Australians will need to adopt some aspects of the east's living culture whether they want to or not. This could mean that shared apartments would replace the three bedroom house, higher density of people would limit urban sprawl, and communal outdoor open spaces would replace the 'sacred' backyard. All of these things would immediately benefit the communities, if designed well, as they would become more populated.



NextGen Housing Research

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